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ON

MIXT COMMUNION;

IN A

LETTER to a FRIEND.

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——*were baptized,—and added unto them,* &c. Acts ii. 41.

Observe these things, without preferring one before another, 1 Tim. v. 21.

Let all things be done decently, and in order, 1 Cor. xiv. 40.

By *JAMES TURNER*.

COVENTRY:

Printed by J. W. PIERCY, in *Broad-gate*. M,DCC,LXXIII.

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PRINTED FOR T. TURNER.

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(Price Threepence.)

THOUGHTS
ON
MIXT COMMUNION.

Dear SIR,

IT is cuſtomary with ſome few Baptiſt miniſters and churches, to admit of what is called *free and open*, or *mixt* communion; i. e. to receive pedobaptiſts to fellowſhip at the Lord's-table. Now I ingenuouſly own to you that I do not approve of this cuſtom; yet would very willingly allow every man, miniſter and church, full and free liberty to act as judgment guides, and conſcience dictates, in every matter of religion. If, however, theſe good people have faith in this affair, I would recommend to them the advice of the Apoſtle, *to have it to themſelves before God*; and beware alſo, *that they have not the faith of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, in reſpect of perſons*. The advocates for the above practice, have taken great pains, not only in vindicating their own opinion and practice, but alſo have made pretty free with the judgment and candor of their brethren, who differ from them. They ſeem not at all pleaſed, that the Baptiſt churches in general do not give in to the ſame practice. Theſe gentlemen would be thought eminent for their candor and charity; and want to have it believed, that all who differ from them are deficient in the exerciſe of thoſe noble virtues. But ſuppoſing it a real matter of conſcience with a church, to admit none but ſuch as are baptized by immerſion, to their communion; muſt they, on this account, be deemed bigots, and cenſured for want of candor? If this rule were made general, every church, and every chriſtian, muſt be charged with bigotry, and reckoned uncandid.

[illegible] which [illegible] admitted as a virtue, [illegible] and admits the validity of a human invention? No, surely: charity loſes the name, when it forſakes the paths of truth, and wanders away into a labyrinth of ſuppoſitions, in order to pleaſe man, and get a name. Do the ſcriptures point out to us any rule, or furniſh us either with *precept*, or *precedent*, for mixt communion? No: indeed our brethren do not plead this. Upon what then do they ground their practice? Why, much upon the ſame principles the Pedobaptiſts ground the practice of infant-baptiſm,—upon *circumſtances*, and *ſuppoſitions*. They indeed ask, whether all believers have not a right to all the ordinances and privileges of the houſe of God? I anſwer, undoubtedly they have; but then, ſurely, it muſt be in the way God has appointed, and that we find in *Acts* ii. 41. *Then they that gladly received the word, were baptized; and the ſame day were added unto them about three thouſand ſouls.* 1ſt, They were taught, and received the word—2d, They were baptized—3d, They were added to the church. This, then, was the grand rule obſerved by the inſpired apoſtles, and the firſt church we read of in the New Teſtament;—a rule and method that, I ſhould imagine, ought to be obſerved by all the churches of Chriſt, throughout all ages and places.

I now beg leave to aſk thoſe miniſters and churches, who give into the practice of mixt communion, whether they would, *aye* or *na*, admit a perſon to fellowſhip at the Lord's table, who had never been *ſprinkled?* If they anſwer, *No*;—then I reply, that they admit ſprinkling to be valid, or a right mode of baptiſm:—If the anſwer be, *Yes*;—I, in that caſe, reply, that they totally ſet aſide baptiſm; and, as far as in them lies, cancel and nullify it: for, if it is lawful to omit it in one inſtance, why not in *every* one? and ſo, farewel ordinance of baptiſm!

It is with no ſmall concern that I obſerve our brethren, who are ſuch advocates for mixt communion, often extolling the ordinance of the Lord's ſupper, as if it were really eſſential to ſalvation; and at the ſame time, ſpeak of the ordinance of baptiſm, as if it were no part of religion; and, as if it ſignified little what became of the latter, if we could but preſerve our fellowſhip in the former. I am

not

not convinced, however, that there is any difference between the ſolemnity and importance of the one, and the other. Paul's ſolemn charge to Timothy, is, in my humble opinion, full to the preſent purpoſe;—*I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the elect Angels, that thou obſerve theſe things, without preferring one before another; doing nothing by partiality.* Why then, in the name of every thing ſacred, do our brethren prefer one ordinance before another, and do things by partiality?—Why? becauſe they would avoid bigotry, and practiſe charity; and, I would wiſh every Chriſtian to do ſo too; but not at the expence of truth, and a good conſcience. It is pity, methinks, that miniſters and churches cannot act faithfully and uprightly, without being defamed, and told they are *narrow-ſpirited, ſtrait-laced, uncandid, &c.* it is better, however, to be branded as a bigot, with truth on our ſide, than to acquire the name of *charitable*, at the expence of it.

I am firmly perſuaded, that baptiſm by immerſion is an ordinance of Chriſt, and the great duty and privilege of thoſe who believe in him; yet, I am far from thinking it eſſential to ſalvation:—I never did think ſo:—but I have thought, and ſtill think, that it is eſſential to communion; and which I ground on the practice of the primitive churches, and the plain ſenſe of ſcripture. I love good men of all denominations, and heſitate not to declare my firm perſuaſion, that they will be ſaved, whether they are, or are not, baptized by immerſion; yet, for all this, I ſhould not chuſe to encourage mixt communion. It is eaſy to depart from all the grand eſſential doctrines of religion, under the pretence of candor; and it is well if this is not the caſe with hundreds of congregations in this kingdom, at this day. An unguarded *bigotry* on the one hand, and an unbounded *charity* on the other, are equally ſubverſive of religion; and, in proportion as theſe have prevailed, purity of doctrine, and ſtrictneſs of diſcipline, have declined. All reaſonable allowances, I grant, are to be made for every one's weakneſs and infirmity in the preſent ſtate, but care ſhould be taken not to throw away *ſacred* things for *carnal*. In ſome places, perhaps, there may be ſome rich and reputable Pedobaptiſts, who are conſiderable ſupports to a baptiſt miniſter, and a credit to his flock;—they propoſe to ſit down with the church;—the church, unwilling to diſoblige ſuch friends, conſent: and this is, perhaps, one, if not the main ſpring

ſpring, of mixt communion. If this remark ſhould be thought ſevere and cenſorious, I apologize for it, by *wiſhing it were not true.*

I now proceed to examine the arguments uſed in favour of free communion;—and to offer my reaſons againſt them. This I mean to do, without prejudice or partiality. Then we ſhall, firſt, examine the arguments in favour of free, or mixt communion, and they are ſuch as theſe, viz.—

1ſt. It is ſaid, "that all who appear to have received the grace "of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, have a right to all the privileges of the "goſpel, &c." This we noted and granted before, with this remark, that they ſhould enjoy their right in God's appointed way. The way pointed out in ſcripture, to the *wine*, is through the *water*. Let us not encourage any, therefore, to climb up ſome other way. Let every thing be done decently, and in ORDER:—Baptiſm firſt, and the Lord's ſupper next. Again,

2d, It is ſaid, "that all believers hold their right to the privi-"leges of the goſpel, by the authority and grant of Chriſt," and "that we have no right to exclude them from any one of thoſe pri-"vileges, &c." I anſwer, very true; we have no right to exclude them;—neither do we exclude them:—if there is any excluſion in the caſe, they exclude themſelves, by refuſing to obey the Lord Jeſus, in ſubmitting to the one baptiſm he ſubmitted to himſelf, and enjoined upon all his dear followers.

Suppoſing a Pedobaptiſt ſhould apply to a Baptiſt miniſter for admittance at the Lord's table; and he tells him, "Sir, I have no objection, but that you have not been baptized by immerſion; and I could wiſh with all my heart, you would do yourſelf the favour carefully to examine that point. Do, Sir, lay aſide prejudice, and give the New Teſtament another reading; and remember, that the reaſon why I cannot in conſcience admit you, lies in yourſelf; and, if a ſin, it is wholly your own. I have, 'tis true, no manner of right to force your conſcience; nor have you, my good Sir, any right to force mine. I am willing to oblige you; I pity you, and love you; but do not be angry with me, and call me bigot, for not complying with your preſent requeſt." If we obſerve the golden rule, *(as ye would that men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them)*

them) we shall not be guilty of any thing illiberal, or unbecoming the Christian, in respect to the present affair. Let any impartial person, then, judge where the act of exclusion lies. Moreover, supposing a person who had never been sprinkled in infancy, should apply to a *Pedobaptist* minister for communion, would the minister admit him? No:—Why so? because he had not been baptized. Where then is the fault? in the minister, or in the candidate? Certainly not in the minister; it is matter of conscience with him, not to receive him without baptism, in *his* way;—so it is matter of conscience with us, not to admit any without baptism, in *our* way.

3d, It is further said, "That while we take upon us to exclude "any of the children of God, from any of the means of grace, we "invade the prerogative of Christ, &c." Very true; we do so: But we proved before, that if there is any exclusion in the case, it lies in the party who refuses to comply with a plain, positive appointment of Christ. If I should be told, that Pedobaptists esteem their mode of baptism right and valid:—I answer, I know they do: But must *we* think so, because *they* think so, at the same time that we are persuaded of the very contrary? If, indeed, any persons should think the two modes of baptism equally valid, let them practise mixt communion and welcome; they act in character; but let them not censure others, for adhering to the dictates of conscience, and the discipline of the house of God.

4th, We are told, "That it is evident Jesus Christ himself does "accept of Pedobaptist Christians, when they remember him at "his table, &c." It may be so:—God is a sovereign, and a most merciful Father to his children, in their time-state. But I must confess, this argument wears an odd complexion, and is a good deal a-kin to one I once heard a Pedobaptist make use of, in favour of infant baptism; he said, "he was *sure* it was right, for he re-"membered that Mr. ——— was very much affected when bap-"tizing a child, for he shed tears; and he was persuaded he en-"joyed the presence of God." It is an easy matter to take that *for granted*, which should be *proved*; and to pass a mere supposition, in lieu of an argument: But such a procedure is unfair, and concludes nothing in the present case. If the scripture afforded fair proof

proof that unbaptized perſons have a right to ſit down at the Lord's table, ſuppoſitions and begging queſtions would be uſeleſs.

5th, It is alſo ſaid, "That we are expreſly commanded to re-"ceive the weak in the faith, without objecting againſt them "doubtful diſputations;—not ſetting up our own infallibility as "the ſtandard of truth, &c." Very true; we ought to receive thoſe who are weak in the faith,—but are we to receive thoſe who oppoſe it? I muſt confeſs, I think this argument is *weak in the faith*. Applying ſcripture to one point, which evidently belongs to another, is unfair, and unſafe. There is a very material difference betwixt being *weak in the faith*, and having *no faith at all*,—which is the caſe with the Pedobaptiſts, in reference to baptiſm by *immerſion*. Moreover, we grant that no man, nor body of men, have any right to ſet up their own infallibility as the ſtandard of truth:—But the queſtion is, Have they a right to ſet up the word of God, as the ſtandard of truth; and to abide by its doctrines and ordinances, let whoever will oppoſe them?—Have they a right to be honeſt and faithful, ſteady and conſcientious, and not barter away truth for peace, and depart from the inſtitutions of Chriſt, for ſome pecuniary advantage? Again,

6th, Mixt communion is pleaded for, "becauſe, if we believe "ſuch Pedobaptiſts as before deſcribed, to be ſincere Chriſtians, "as we are bound to do, then it is evident, in fact, that the points "in baptiſm, about which we differ, are not ſo clearly ſtated in the "Bible, but that even ſincere Chriſtians may miſtake them." I anſwer, 1ſt, The ordinance of baptiſm, in my opinion, is very particularly ſtated in the Bible: I know not of any truth more clearly ſtated there. It ſhines like a ſun-beam in the bleſſed pages of the New Teſtament:—it is made plain as upon tables, that whoſoever runs, may read. 2d, Though we freely own the perſons above referred to, to be ſincere Chriſtians, (and we *do* own it with pleaſure) what then? ſhall their diſbelief of baptiſm, make the ordinance of none effect?—And, moreover, though theſe good people miſtake the point of baptiſm, it does not follow, that the defect lies in the ſcripture evidence about it, but in the prejudices they have all their life time harboured againſt it.

It is added, that "A private opinion, on the one ſide, or the other, "can never be *juſtly* made an indiſpenſible term of communion at "the

But how can baptism be called a *private* opinion? It was the leading one under the present dispensation;—our Lord submitted to it, and then begun his ministry;—made this just remark upon it, *Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness, &c.* With what propriety of language, or colour of reason, it can be called a *private opinion*, I am totally at a loss to say. Moreover, I know of no *human authority* that makes this a term of communion. It is made so, by the authority of the Eternal GOD. The word of God presents us with the great privileges and duties of Christians, in the following order; 1st, Preaching—2d, Believing—3d, Baptizing—4th, Admittance into the Church—and, 5th, Breaking of bread, &c. Let every one, therefore, be careful how they separate, change, or transpose the order and ordinances of the great sovereign of Zion. Yet further,

I am not a little astonished, to find baptism termed a *non-essential* of religion.—A non-essential! Why are not prayer, thanksgiving, and all other Christian duties, termed non-essentials of religion also?

The King of Saints tells us, that THUS it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness:—Men tell us, that it is a non-essential of religion. Had they called it, a non-essential of *salvation*, I would have freely concurred in opinion; but in the way it is expressed, human authority is set above the divine, with a witness. What an amazing creature is man! and what will not some men say to serve a turn?

There are some other particulars, called arguments, often made use of, but as they are similar to those already noted, we shall dismiss this part of the subject; and,

2d, Point out the objections against the practice of mixt communion. And be it known to all the world; be it proclaimed to men and angels, that those objections do not proceed from a narrow, selfish spirit, but from conscience, and a sincere regard to the honor of Christ, and the order of his house.

But, 1ſt, One objection is,—Moſt of thoſe Pedobaptiſts whom we particularly reſpect, are generally very warm oppoſers of adult baptiſm, and have not been wanting to ſhew their diſlike to it *out* of doors, and therefore it is ſcarcely poſſible they ſhould ſhew it any more favour, when *within* doors. It is very reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that what influence and ſway they may have in Church affairs, will be exerted in diſcouraging adult baptiſm. It cannot be imagined that they ſhould be hearty and ſincere friends, and well wiſhers to a Baptiſt intereſt. And who can wonder, if, when a favourable opportunity offers, they exert their influence in turning the ſcale againſt the Baptiſts? They look upon infant baptiſm, as a thing of very great importance. They are not ſo tame in their conceſſions about it, as many of the Baptiſts have been about adult baptiſm:—they do not eſteem it a *circumſtance*, a *non-eſſential*, &c. And, indeed, if a child is brought into covenant with God in baptiſm, (as they *ſay* it is) it muſt be one of the moſt important things in life, and ought not to be omitted for the world;—though this wants proof.

2d, Mixt Communion retards freedom of ſpeech, both in miniſter and people. It lays upon them an embargo not to ſpeak upon the point of baptiſm. They muſt be ſilent, leſt they ſtir up ſtrife, foment diſcord, and cauſe a breach. And though I know of no neceſſity why this point ſhould be always, or even *often* inſiſted on, yet certainly there are times when both miniſter and people ſhould particularly ſhew their attachment to it (not as the favorite notion of a party, but) as an ordinance of God. And though the utmoſt prudence may be uſed on thoſe occaſions, every attempt to vindicate adult baptiſm muſt be diſagreeable to a zealous Pedobaptiſt. And therefore if faithfulneſs is ſhewn on both ſides, a cordial friendſhip (a grand requiſite in church-communion) is rendered precarious, if not impoſſible; and *an houſe divided againſt itſelf cannot ſtand.* Further,

3d, This practice of mixt communion naturally tends to bring the holy inſtitution of adult baptiſm into ſtill leſs repute among profeſſors, and is the ready way, in my opinion, to a total diſuſe of it. The Baptiſt-advocates for mixt communion are undermining,

with

with their own hands, the very ground they stand upon [illegible] to baptiſm; and at the ſame time lay a foundation for their *ſtricter* brethren to be calumniated, and looked upon as rigid and unchurchable. I am ſorry to ſay that ſome of them have been illiberally treated on this very account. In a word, I am firmly of opinion, that no method could be taken to ſtop the progreſs of adult baptiſm more effectually than mixt communion. And tho' this reaſon carries no weight with it in the opinion of a *Pedobaptiſt*, yet certainly it ought to have ſome with a *Baptiſt*. If Chriſtians are bound to keep the ordinances of *man*, in a civil ſtate, then ſurely they are bound to keep the ordinances of God, in a religious ſtate, ſee Rom. xiii. 2. 1 Cor. xi. 2. It is not our buſineſs to preſcribe any rule of worſhip, or moral obligation to any man, (to his own maſter he ſtandeth or falleth) neither ſhould we reproach or reſent good people of any denomination, but eſteem them as brethren; and rejoice, notwithſtanding our preſent differences in opinion, that we ſhall commune together, in a more perfect and happy ſtate, for ever; when the former things ſhall be done away, and we ſhall ſee as we are ſeen, and know as we are known.

Our Baptiſt brethren mention many ſcriptures reſpecting charity, forbearance, brotherly love, &c. and often refer to the diſpute at *Antioch*, between the Jew and Gentile converts, about *circumciſion*, &c. which I apprehend are not in point, as to the diſpute about mixt communion. And now, Sir, have patience with me while I juſt remark,

4th, That I have often heard it obſerved, "That *truth* ſhould "always be preferred to *peace*," but our Baptiſt brethren, who are advocates for free communion, (as they term it) have reverſed this maxim, by preferring peace to truth.

What happy conſequences have accrued to their churches by this method, I take not upon me to judge; neither do I mean to incur their diſpleaſure, or ſet up as their dictator in this or any other affair. They are anſwerable only to God and their own conſciences.

Nor is this letter dictated by a ſpirit of malevolence, or of a par-

ty ſ

y; but only to give a modeſt anſwer to the reaſoning of our friends on this ſubject.

Concluding with my beſt wiſhes for the proſperity of Zion, and ALL who love her, I am,

Dear Sir, yours, &c.

ARISTOBULUS.

THE END.

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